

COUNCIL 13 FEBRUARY 2020 - AGENDA ITEM 8 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr P Middlebrough will ask Marcus Hart:

“This winter there have been many occasions when students who live in Upton upon Severn and attend Hanley Castle High School have been unable to walk to school because of the closure due to flooding of Hanley Road and so have needed to use motorised transport.

This entails a round trip of at least 15 miles depending on which other roads are flooded. These students live within the statutory walking distance or 3 miles and so are not entitled to school travel assistance.

What steps will the Cabinet Member take to ensure that free school travel assistance is available on days when Hanley Road is flooded.”

Answer

It is the parents’ duty to ensure their child can get to school. Where appropriate, the Council, in line with the Home to School Transport Policy, will provide transport to support parents in their duty. The policy sets the statutory walking distance at 3 miles for children over the age of eight. For parents, whose children live within that statutory distance, it is the parents’ responsibility to ensure the child can access the school either walking or via a car.

We have spoken to Hanley Castle High School and they informed us that the impact of the flooding has been minimal. The majority of children are driven to school and parents appear to be happy to follow the diversions set up to ensure their children can still attend school. The school has not, to its knowledge, received any complaints about this issue.

In terms of free school travel assistance, the difficulty is this is not something permanent that we would have some better discretion. It would frankly be operationally impossible to provide transport at short notice and set up a scheme where there would be free school transport for parents and if we did it for Hanley Castle High School we would have to do it elsewhere in the county. Whilst I sympathise with parents and particular sympathy with the local member, for having to deal with this issue, I don’t think on this occasion that we would be able to commission an operational service where there might be other more pragmatic solutions available.

Supplementary question

In response to the supplementary question, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills agreed to look at the possibility of establishing a voluntary self-determined school travel scheme which could be rolled into practice when Hanley Road is flooded to allow children to attend Hanley Castle High School. He also agreed on behalf of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways to look at the practicalities of making a safer footway along Hanley Road to allow pupils to walk/cycle to Hanley Castle High School when the road is flooded.